

FBI ASSASSINATION INVESTIGATION FILE - NOTES ON PRELIMINARY RELEASE

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HW

SPECIAL NOTE ON NUMBERING SYSTEM:

*** Most, but not all, of the documents in this FBI file (Bufile 105-82555) bear a serial number which uniquely identifies the item. For convenience, I have added letter suffixes for items which are not already uniquely identified. I would strongly urge that all outside researchers using these documents adopt this system.

To avoid ambiguity, I have decided to use (e.g.) 6A to refer to the first item with the serial number 6, not the second. Sometimes an item which is already identified as 6 in the FBI's list will become 6A in mine. That is, a single item may be identified both as 6 and 6A, but in all cases 6A and 6 will refer to the same item.

Hopefully, a few examples will make this clear:

FBI: 5, 6, Unrec, Unrec, 7, 8, 8-Encl, 9-In, 9-Out, Unrec, 10,10-Out.
PLH: 5, 6A, 6B, 6C, 7, 8A, 8B, 9A, 9B, 9C, 10A (or 10), 10B.

SCOPE OF THIS RELEASE:

The material given to me in September is from Volumes 1 through 3 of Bufile 105-82555, which is the main Oswald file. It is my understanding that there are about 250 volumes in the entire file, which presumably will account for the estimated 80,000 pages in the forthcoming release.

The pages I have can be broken down as follows:

Volume Released:			Withheld:		Total:	
Number	Items	Pages	Items	Pages	Items	Pages
1	110	303	24	71	134	374
	[Pre-ass'n:(63)	(145)	(11)	(33)	(74)	(178)]
2	63	98	16	35	79	133
	[Pre-ass'n:(16)	(26)	(1)	(2)	(17)	(28)]
3	91	193	9	28	100	221
Total	264	594	49	134	313	728
	[Pre-ass'n:(79)	(171)	(12)	(35)	(91)	(206)]

It is not at all clear to me that file 105-82555 includes all, or even the most interesting part, of the investigative file. I haven't checked this out, but when I was quickly reviewing these pages, I saw quite a few references to earlier teletype messages which I did not recall seeing. It is much too soon to draw any conclusions from this, especially since the material which has been released is not in strict chronological order; it is quite likely that subsequent material will include material going back to November 22. In any case, the possibly limited scope of this file should be kept in mind.

The FBI told me that there were two relevant "62" (administrative) files, one for communications with the Warren Commission, and another which was set up before there was a Warren Commission, to contain the FBI's internal administrative items on this subject. (This information was given to me orally, and I may have misunderstood.) We should find out the exact status of any relevant FBI files other than 105-82555 (keeping in mind the possibility that there is good stuff in the "Do Not File" files, the COINTELPRO files, and Hoover's official and/or personal files).

For the post-assassination investigation, I am willing to assume (for the time being) that most of the good stuff is in headquarters files. The pre-assassination material is a quite different matter.

COMMENTS ON THE PRE-ASSASSINATION MATERIAL IN THIS FILE:

Serials 1 through 49 constitute the actual pre-assassination main file on Oswald, as listed in CE 834. Most of these items were released earlier; some of the most interesting ones are still withheld; and I didn't see anything really exciting in the newly released items. Obviously, all the pre-assassination records deserve much closer scrutiny. My hunch is that most of the funny business relating to Oswald originated in the field offices, so the field office files are of particular importance.

I have a long-standing pending FOIA request for all the pre-assassination records, specifically including field office files and headquarters files other than this one. That request is now being processed. The FBI has suggested to me, rather unconvincingly, that the scope of my request was not clear. In fact, the preliminary release of these 594 pages to me was made, nominally, in response to my pending request.

Serials 54B through 54R (17 items) are pre-assassination records which were in the New Orleans files, but which had not been sent to headquarters by 11/22. They were evidently submitted in response to a phone call on 11/26 by Inspector Gale, who may well have been concerned about what had gone on in New Orleans. (Incidentally, I have a separate request pending for Gale's report of 12/10/63, which was discussed at some length in the Schweiker Report, and could be really interesting.) Several of these New Orleans items are noteworthy; see my comments elsewhere. In particular, item 54K gives a picture of Stuckey's contacts with the FBI which is so different from what he told Priscilla Johnson that it raises serious questions about the integrity of the FBI's records - i.e., it suggests that intentionally inaccurate memos were being written for the record. (The facts left out of this memo - that the FBI let Stuckey see the Oswald file, and apparently initiated his exposé of Oswald's Russian stay - are significant also; parenthetically, the circumstances tend to imply that Oswald was not working for the FBI in New Orleans at that time!) Additional questions about funny business inside the FBI are raised by the fact that a transcript of Oswald's 'Carte Blanche' appearance which was in the New Orleans files was not sent to Washington in response to Gale's request, but was submitted much later (in CD 897).

In summary, the pre-assassination records should be looked at most carefully, but preferably when the field office items are also available.

COMMENTS ON THE WITHHELD ITEMS:

The FBI emphasized that the material given me reflected the results of their preliminary screening, implying that some of the withheld items (especially those with information from other agencies) would be released soon. Thus, no inferences should be drawn from the withholding in the preliminary release.

Nonetheless, I am interested in everything which is withheld. A good starting point for an initial review of the forthcoming release would be items which were not given me and are now released. (For example, item 50C, a 9-page memo of 11/22 from Branigan to Sullivan, and item 76, a similar 7-page memo, could be really important.)

My impression is that quite a few of the withheld items relate to FBI access to Oswald's correspondence with the CPUSA and the SWP in New York. If the report of the Abzug Committee which was looking into CIA mail interception is now available, it should be checked for any mention of Oswald; some of the withheld FBI items could relate to CIA interceptions.

THE GENERAL NATURE OF THE RELEASED ITEMS:

Volumes 1 through 3 are a real mixed bag. Most of the pages relate to investigative leads which are familiar to me from CD's in the Archives, and are therefore not very interesting. Some pages reflect administrative or procedural details relating to these leads, and are even less interesting. Some of these leads may be significant to others, but I think that anyone who is looking for investigative material would be better off going through the FBI CD's in the Archives, which total less than 80,000 pages, I'm sure.

So far, the one really significant investigative item I have found is the evidence that Army Intelligence got the FBI started on Oswald's Hidell draft card. (See my separate memo on items 49B, 49D, and 49E.) I suspect that this story is too subtle to be newsworthy, and in any case perhaps the House Committee deserves a chance to go after it without publicity at the moment. My intuition is that it could be a very useful lead.

To me, the most interesting part of these volumes is the roughly 10% (by page count) which is internal FBI HQ memos - to and from people like Belmont, Sullivan,

and Tolson. Handwritten comments by Hoover himself are particularly interesting, and might easily lend themselves to news stories. The Schweiker Report quoted quite a few of these Hoover comments, some of which (e.g., the reference to Ambassador Mann as a "Sherlock Holmes") are in these items. (Jack Anderson did a couple of columns some time back, evidently based on access to internal FBI memos with Hoover's comments. I don't think I have yet seen most of the memos he cited; they could be in one of the administrative files mentioned above.) If I had access to the entire release, I would start by going over these internal memos, without even reading the teletypes to and from specific field offices (with the exception of anything dated, say, on or before November 24).

USE OF ANNOTATED INVENTORY WORKSHEETS:

The FBI gave me their 'inventory worksheets' for the first 3 volumes. These sheets contain the serial number and date of each item, a description indicating the type of communication and the source or recipient (but not the subject), and the number of pages (both in the full document, and released.) Where there are deletions, the relevant FOIA exemptions are listed.

I have annotated these worksheets, adding a unique identifier (as discussed at the beginning of these notes), and a short description of the contents of the item.

A sample annotated worksheet is enclosed. Because of the relatively small amount of information on each page, and the cost of Xeroxing and mailing, I am sending the full 22 pages only to the AIB and the CTIA. (Others can get copies from me, or (if convenient) from them.) (I am not sending out the first 6 pages at all; they cover the file listed in CE 834, and contain no additional information, except for page counts and the fact that items 15-18, 22, 24, 57-58, and 61-63 (in the CE 834 numbering scheme) are initially withheld.)

Eventually, it would certainly be nice to have a fully annotated complete set of these worksheets. Initially, it might be worthwhile to circulate an unannotated set. The number of pages would be substantial, but manageable, especially if we can get a reduced (2 on 1) Xerox copy to work with.

My annotation includes the notoriously subjective PLH rating system - 0 through 3 stars. I take no responsibility for leaving out anybody's favorite items!

As indicated above, all pre-assassination items, and all initially withheld items, deserve at least a rating of "*", whether I have indicated that rating or not. These ratings reflect the biases of a critic who is generally familiar with the material in the Archives, the CIA file, etc., and certainly not the interests of the press. There could be 0-star or 1-star items which would make a nice news story; I don't have a very good feel for that sort of thing. (See, for example, item 89H, which I rated "***" but which is really more amusing than important to me.)

SUMMARY OF ITEM RATINGS:

***	49B, -D, -E	Army-Hidell-FBI (See separate memo)
***	50T	Katzenbach memo to Moyers, quoted in SR
***	54K	Stuckey's FBI contact, 8/21/63 (as discussed above)
***	89H	Speculation that ammo was manufactured under CIA contract
***	95	Premature conclusions; keeping Fritz off TV, etc.

(In general, as suggested by the Schweiker Report, many of the most obviously interesting items reflect initial FBI reaction to the developing situation.)

** items (detailed notes will follow):

49F, 50Z, 54, 54E-G, 54L, 54R (withheld), 56, 64(?), 76 (withheld), 77, 91C, 92, 96D, 97B, 97D.

* items:

49J, 50C, 50E, 50I, 50L, 50N, 50FF, 50II-JJ (withheld), 5000, 50QQ, 50XX, 54B thru 54R (except those rated higher than *), 55, 59, 65, 68, 72, 74, 76B (withheld), 79(?), 82, 83, 87B; 93, 97C, 103(?), 105, 111(?), 114, 120C, 124B, 127, 134, 137(?), 154B, 154D, 154E, 154L, 158(?), 159(?).

(The CTIA has a copy of all ** and *** items.)

Inventory Worksheet
FD-503 (2-18-77)

106-82555
File No: SECTION 3

Re: LEE HARVEY OSWALD

Date: JULY 1977
(month/year)

Serial	Date	Description (Type of communication, to, from)	No. of Pages		Exemptions used or, to whom referred (Identify statute if (b)(3) cited)
			Actual	Released	
91A IN	11-23-63	(R. Aznarez, New Orleans) LETTER FROM CITIZEN	2	4 PP. (2 CC.) 2	NONE He wrote FBI about LHO in June; and what about Castro, H. Mathews, etc.
91B ENC	—	NEWSPAPER ARTICLE	1	1	NONE NOTP clip with LHO holding up his manacled hands
91C OUT	11-27-63	LETTER TO CITIZEN	1	1	NONE Thanks. Aznarez did furnish a FPCC handbill earlier **
92	—	(Don Maclean column, DC News) NEWSPAPER ARTICLE	2	2	NONE With JEH comments objecting to implied FBI laxity **
93	11-29-63	MEMO FROM HOOVER	2	2	NONE Call from Judge M. Kronheim re ACLU (unclear implications) *
94	11-22-63	BRENNAN TO SULLIVAN MEMO	1	1	NONE INS has LHO letter to Connally; ONI file is coming to DC
95	11-24-63	BELMONT TO TOLSON MEMO	2	2	NONE Conclusions on LHO; keeping Fritz off TV, etc. ***
96	11-24-63	BRENNAN TO SULLIVAN MEMO	1		
96B UNREC	11-24-63	NEW YORK TELETYPE	3		
96C UNREC	11-25-63	NEW YORK TELETYPE	3		
96D UNREC	11-26-63	EVANS TO BELMONT MEMO	2	2	NONE Katzebach suggestions re FBI report; JEH comments **
97	11-27-63	CIA RELEASE	1		

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